



PHOTO & CAPTION

Businesswoman Opens Doors



Photo: USAID/Dina Cernobregu

Vjosa Mullatahiri is a young entrepreneur who wanted to help businesses in Kosovo develop to their full potential. She decided one way to help would be to train entrepreneurs in writing business plans and to teach them how to find new markets. Vjosa opened a business consulting service, the Community Business Development Center, in the town of Gjakova/Djakovica.

Vjosa was a pioneer in Kosovo, where the concept of business consulting was completely new. At first, it was difficult to convince businesses that the center's advice could really make an impact on their business. But Vjosa patiently developed services to target the needs of different businesses, showing them how to adjust to changing market conditions and expand their markets.

When Vjosa decided that she wanted to embark on an ambitious tax deduction project, she turned to USAID. In coordination with USAID, the center conducted a thorough analysis of a possible

customs tax deduction for some goods and the potential impact of such a deduction. The Community Business Development Center presented its findings in a report to businesses, tax experts, and government officials.

As a result, the government incorporated some of the recommendations from the report into its tax deduction regulations in October 2005. One of these recommendations was to provide greater tax relief for lumber imports, allowing local carpentry businesses to buy more lumber and produce more wood products. "By making it easier to import wood, processors could increase production — and the government will still collect taxes when the furniture is sold," said Vjosa.

Being a pioneer in business consulting in Kosovo is sometimes a struggle, but Vjosa has started to build a loyal clientele and a good reputation. With help from USAID, Vjosa and her staff are hopeful that business consulting services like theirs will help Kosovo's economy become stronger and more innovative.

"As a woman in business I thought many doors would be closed to me, but once I was there I opened them," said Vjosa Mullatahiri (center back), director of the Community Business Development Center in Gjakova/Djakovica.

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